



THE VEGGIE MASTER

// BY RUTHANNE JOHNSON

FLAVORFUL FOOD was a big deal in Rich Landau's childhood home in the Philadelphia suburbs. His family discussed meals before, after, and during dinner, analyzing each dish and what they would do differently. Beef brisket, roasted turkey, and giant flame-broiled hamburgers were staples. But after his father explained where meat comes from, Landau felt torn.

"This posed a huge ethical dilemma for me because I loved the taste of meat," he remembers.

Worried that a vegetarian diet meant giving up his enjoyment of food, the budding chef experimented at home, determined to outdo the meaty flavors he'd come to love by using spices, herbs, and sauces. "Flavor was so important and I learned early on [how] to get these ... layers into my cooking." As a young man, he learned about restaurant cooking while tending bar, and he later opened Horizons Café, which quickly developed a dedicated following.

Landau's culinary journey ultimately led to Vedge, the downtown Philly restaurant he and his wife, Kate Jacoby, opened in 2011. Seasonal vegetable dishes like tandoor-spiced cauliflower and grilled brussels sprouts in smoked mustard sauce attract customers from near and far. *Philadelphia Magazine's* food editor described a radish dish as "not just delicious but revelatory." In 2013, the magazine named Vedge one of the city's top three restaurants. That same year, Landau won the Food Network's competitive cooking show *Chopped*. He and Jacoby have cooked for Bill Clinton, and their recently published *Vedge* cookbook is garnering acclaim from chefs and home cooks alike.

For Landau, success is simply watching faces light up as people bite into his sweet potato pâté, eggplant braciolo, or other signature dishes. That was his goal when opening Vedge. "I wanted them to say, this is a great meal and it doesn't matter that there wasn't any meat in anything."

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GRILLED ZUCCHINI WITH GREEN OLIVES, CILANTRO, AND TOMATO

(SERVES 4)

INGREDIENTS

- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 teaspoons tamari
- 2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
- 3 zucchinis, sliced lengthwise into three equal-sized planks
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup diced tomatoes
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup pimento-stuffed green olives, drained and sliced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup vegetable stock
- 2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, chopped

DIRECTIONS

1. In a small bowl, whisk together 2 tablespoons olive oil with tamari, 1 teaspoon pepper, and balsamic vinegar.
2. Brush zucchini planks on all sides with the marinade.
3. Heat a grill pan on high, then sear the zucchini planks for about 2 minutes on each side, in batches if necessary (an outdoor grill works well: set grill to high and char each side until grill marks appear, 3 to 4 minutes total).
4. Arrange grilled zucchini on a serving dish. Meanwhile, start the sauce by heating the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large sauté pan over high heat. When oil begins to ripple, add garlic and brown. Add tomatoes, olives, salt, and remaining teaspoon of pepper. Cook for 3 minutes, add stock, and then cook until volume reduces by one quarter, about 5 minutes. Stir in cilantro, pour over grilled zucchini, and serve.

Recipe from *Vedge: 100 Plates Large and Small That Redefine Vegetable Cooking*, © Rich Landau and Kate Jacoby, 2013. Reprinted by permission of the publisher, The Experiment. Available wherever books are sold.



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